



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Mark Johnson, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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March 15, 2018

To: Directors, Exceptional Children Programs  
Lead Administrators, Charter Schools

From: William J. Hussey, Director ~~2017~~  
Exceptional Children Division

RE: Guidance on Specially Designed Instruction for Students with Functional Needs

The purpose of this memo is to address the following question: *Does the need for specially designed instruction (SDI) in some area of functional performance (only) satisfy the third prong of eligibility for special education and related services?*

According to NC 1500-2.34, there are five avenues for the provision of special education:

- 1) *Physical education* – special physical education, adapted physical education, movement education, and motor development
- 2) *Specially designed instruction* – adapted content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to ensure access to general curriculum standards
- 3) *Travel training* – instruction to enable development of awareness of the environment and the skills necessary to move effectively and safely from place to place within the environment
- 4) *Vocational training* - programs related to preparation for paid or unpaid employment, or for additional preparation for a career not requiring a baccalaureate or advanced degree
- 5) *Speech language pathology services* - speech and language services for the habilitation of communication impairments, including form, content, and function of language

In some cases, students have physical, travel, vocational or speech-language educational needs that are not specifically academic in nature. This may occur for students who are eligible for special education in the Speech Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired, Hearing Impairment, Visual Impairment, and/or Other Health Impaired categories. Students may require special education to:

- Develop age-/grade-level speech and language skills
- Learn how to manage personal care and health needs (feeding, toileting, administering medicine, managing blood sugar, etc.)
- Gain independence with mobility, moving throughout the school day, campus, and community
- Gain independence with managing materials and tools (organization, written expression, computer literacy, etc.)
- Participate in school routines
- Operate with appropriate safety and judgment throughout the school day and campus

The evaluation and special design of interventions for students with needs in these functional areas of education are most often conducted by physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, nurses, teachers of adapted physical education, orientation and mobility specialists, and special education teachers. After design by a licensed specialist, interventions for functional education skills may, in some cases, be delivered by trained/competent instructional personnel, therapy assistants, or nursing assistants, given ongoing monitoring of intervention fidelity and student performance by the licensed specialist. High quality, specially designed interventions for functional skills can improve a

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variety of student outcomes and enhance student participation in school, work, school-sponsored extra-curricular activities and community life.

If you have questions or would like to discuss specially designed interventions for physical, travel, vocational or speech-language educational needs, please contact your regional consultants for Hearing Impairment, Visual Impairment, School Nurse, Monitoring or one of the following:

Laurie Ray, PT Consultant, at 919-636-1827 or [laurie\\_ray@med.unc.edu](mailto:laurie_ray@med.unc.edu)

Lauren Holahan, OT Consultant, at 919-428-7201 or [lauren\\_holahan@med.unc.edu](mailto:lauren_holahan@med.unc.edu)

Perry Flynn, SLP Consultant at 336-256-2005 or [pflynn@uncg.edu](mailto:pflynn@uncg.edu)

**WJH/DM/lh**